

Graves Along The Trail

FORGOTTEN GRAVES

T'ward yon frontier a trail once beckoned,
Where weary wagons toiled the dusty way,
Thro far off prairie and to haze dimmed mountain
Where solitude still holds unbroken sway.

Beside the trail, marked by a rude enclosure,
Three graves I found, where sky and desert blend,
The final camping place of hearts grown weary,
That strived in vain to reach the long trail's end.

The graves lay there so sad, and so neglected,
With tangled weed and sagebrush rank o'ergrown,
Untouched, unnoted quite—they lay forgotten—
The desert, conquered once, now claimed its own.

Forgotten graves, upon the lonely prairie,
Forgotten graves, amid the sage so gray,
With headboards crumbled—with letters faded—
E'en as their loved ones—dust to dust are they.

Forgotten graves, where sweet, wild prairie flowers,
Fair faces nod 'mid ugly brush and weed,
They seem to whisper "We have remembered"—
Can love forget?—Ah, never—no, indeed!

Forgotten graves, with all your tender mem'ries,
Forgotten graves, upon the land—the sea—
With prayer today fond hearts remember, these
Forgotten graves—wherever they may be.

—Herbert S. Auerbach.

"The frequent burials made the hardest sicken. On the soldier's march it is a matter of discipline that after the rattle of musketry over his comrade's grave he shall tramp it to the music of some careless tune in a lively quick step. But in the Mormon camp, the companion who lay ill and gave up the ghost in view of all, all saw he lay stretched a corpse, and all attended to his last resting place. It was a sorrow then, too, of itself, to simple-hearted people, the deficient pomp of their imperfect style of

Pioneers
funeral. The general hopefulness of human—including Mormon—nature, was well illustrated by the fact that the most provident were found unfurnished with undertaker's articles; so that the bereaved affection was driven to melancholy makeshifts. The best expedient, generally, was to cut down a log of some eight or nine feet in length, and slitting it longitudinally, strip off its bark in two half cylinders. These, placed around the body of the deceased, and bound firmly together with withes made of the alburnum, formed a rough sort of tubular coffin, which surviving relatives and friends, with a little show of black crepe, could follow with its enclosure to the hole, or bit of ditch dug to receive it, in the wet ground of the prairie. They grieved to lower it down so poorly clad, and in such an unheeded grave. It was hard—was it right?—thus hurriedly to plunge it in one of the indistinguishable waves of the great land sea, and leave it behind them there, under the cold north rain, abandoned, to be forgotten. They had no tombstones, nor could they find a rock to pile the monumental cairn. So when they filled up the grave, and over it prayed a miserere prayer, and tried to sing a hopeful psalm, their last office was to seek out landmarks, or call in the surveyor to help them determine the bearings of valley bends, headlands, or forks and angles of constant streams, by which its position should, in the future, be remembered and recognized. The name of the beloved person, his age, the date of his death, and these marks were all registered with care. His party was then ready to move on. Such graves mark all the line of the first years of Mormon travel—dispiriting milestones to failing stragglers in the rear."—From a discourse delivered before the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, March 26, 1850, by Thomas L. Kane.

WESTWARD HO!

From far off countries beyond the sea as well as from every state in the Union came men and women, converts to an ideal, to answer the urge of "gathering to Zion." Their hope to build a commonwealth. Each day they were called to give new ideas, new characteristics, new faith, new patriotism, and many to give their all, even their lives. AND IF WE DIE BEFORE OUR JOURNEY'S END, ALL IS WELL, ALL IS WELL. Such was their faith. They were a courageous group, those men and women who made the westward trek, for they faced the certainty of death within their ranks, which is always the price of pioneering. But the assurance they would find a place where they could live and worship God in peace was worth the price.

CHRISTIANNA PEDERSON

My earliest recollection of hearing "Death along the trail" came from my mother's lips, when in answer to the question, "Why didn't we have grandmothers or Aunts or Uncles," she would tell her story.

Christianna Pederson was born in Denmark and was one of the first